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Background on NIS developments, 1948-1962

1. In 14 years, over 6,000 NIS units have been published and initial worldwide coverage has in large part been achieved. From its start in 1948, the NIS Program has constructively met the challenges posed by changing user requirements and growing experience in the complex field of basic intelligence production. The recent emergence of centralized production direction under CIA and DIA provides new opportunity for more comprehensive developments in the NIS program leading toward more current coverage worldwide.

2. The mission of the NIS program is to prepare through systematic interagency effort, the fundamental intelligence of the world required by the U.S. Government, its civilian agencies as well as its military departments. World events have strongly substantiated the objectives of the NIS mission. Chief among these objectives is the on-hand availability of published NIS at the time that a crisis erupts. This is well exemplified by the 1958 Lebanon landings, when COMSIXTHFLT cited the NIS as the most important primary source of intelligence available and used by the U.S. forces suddenly ordered into the area.

3. In structure, the NIS consists of Chapter I, which gives an integrated overview and selective summary of the intelligence aspects of a country, and the supporting Chapters which cover the traditional subjects of strategic intelligence: a country's physical environment, its transportation and telecommunications, the people, the government, its resources and the economy, its scientific potential and developments, and its military forces. This information is prepared, as appropriate, on each country of the world.

4. To meet the different needs of the broad range of NIS users, NIS units are prepared in three levels of basic intelligence detail. As noted above, Chapter I is the most general. The other Chapters supply more detailed information. This is normally prepared in separately published parts called Sections, each of which treats a major subdivision of the field covered by the Chapter. For example, the Transportation and Telecommunications Chapter includes a Section on Highways in which the details of a country's roads are given. For some users, even more detail is required on certain subjects. For this reason, the Supplement has been developed. At present, there are two active Supplements covering Ports and Naval Facilities, and Coasts and Landing Beaches.

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5. Since the inception of the program, there have been several major NIS developments, resulting largely from increased specialized user requirements on the one hand and limitations on producer effort on the other. These developments, for the most part evolutionary in nature, have led to changes in NIS content and new measures to expedite production.

6. As early as 1950 the delineation of beach categories was greatly expanded in response to new amphibious warfare techniques and changes in military concepts reflecting atomic warfare tactics. In 1955 the NIS incorporated socio-economic aspects in its health and sanitation units, thereby significantly broadening intelligence coverage traditionally given to foreign military medicine. In 1957 NIS marine climate and oceanography content was considerably amplified in response to military planning and operational requirements for nuclear missile and submarine developments. About the same time, to satisfy Army psychological warfare requirements, content revisions were made to NIS sociological and political elements. It is noteworthy that these paywar changes have provided a more comprehensive NIS base for answering present counterinsurgency requirements.

7. To meet the need for more timely maintenance, the NIS Committee initiated measures to increase NIS coverage rates within the framework of the limited production resources. These measures included greater selectivity in scheduling NIS areas and topics for maintenance production and procedures for conserving production and processing resources where relatively few changes were required to update a published unit.

8. A new comprehensive plan to achieve more timely essential coverage in the NIS has recently been developed in CBI and approved in principle by DIA. Based on accelerated production rates by producing components under CIA and DIA control, the plan includes these features:

a) The NIS Chapter I titled General Survey, becomes the basic unit of coverage for 115 areas and is produced at the rate of 30 per year (as against 12 per year in the past).

b) Detailed supporting units are produced on a highly selective basis. Detailed Armed Forces coverage would be limited to bloc areas and some subtopics on Military Geography, now published separately, would be combined.

c) The General Survey is prepared on a 2-year cycle for critical areas and a 4-year cycle for other areas. An average 5-year maintenance cycle is established for most other NIS.

d) Production is suspended on some 22 NIS areas of low priority and little current strategic significance. For appropriate topics, NIS areas are combined to gain maximum coverage per unit production effort.

9. The plan establishes a total standing requirement of about 3,500 units, a considerable reduction from the present 5,000-6,000 section requirement. CIA and its supporting agencies are responsible for about 2,300 units; DIA's total requirement is 1,300 units. It is anticipated that the planned accelerated production, which calls for a total of about 650 sections per year -- a 25% increase over the FY 63 scheduled commitment -- can be achieved with present budgetary and manpower levels through the economies and efficiencies implicit in the plan.